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ABSTRACT

Guidelines are offered to help the cooperating teacher build an orientation program for student teachers. In the first section, a list of questions offers a framework for introducing the student teacher to the school environment. These questions deal with what kind of people live in the community, what kind of a community it is, how the community relates to the school, and how the school serves the community. Some broader considerations are included which bear upon the school district, the city, and professional organizations. Within the school itself, questions are suggested on school philosophy, climate, and policies. Specific questions are designed to acquaint student teachers with the classroom, the curriculum, and the characteristics of the students. In the second section, suggestions are made for activities which will help the student teacher become familiar with the community and city as well as with the school and classroom. A planning outline for an orientation program is presented in the third section. (JD)

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PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SERIES FOR SUPERVISING TEACHERS

ORIENTING YOUR STUDENT TEACHER

by

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Prepared under the sponsorship of the Academic Affairs Conference of Midwestern Universities and the Chicago Consortium of Colleges and Universities.

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Introduction

The purpose of this manual is to enable cooperating teachers to build an orientation program for their student teachers. The specific programs which are constructed will be as varied as the individuals doing the planning and as different as the settings which will be the scenes for the student teaching experiences.

It is recommended that you first listen to the audio cassette tape; then read the manual and perform the indicated operations.

Reviewing Your Unique Situation

Over a period of time you have gleaned a great deal of information about the school where you work. This learning was sketchy at first, but has become a complex and integrated pattern. It has become so much a part of you, in fact, that you may take your learned information for granted. In orienting your student teacher, it will be helpful to provide him/her with as rich an overview of his/her new surroundings as possible. The better he/she knows the community, the school, and the students, the more effective he/she will be in planning for instruction.

Often student teachers arrive at their schools eager to begin their work but too unfamiliar with the new situation to ask intelligent questions about it. Therefore, this section contains some relevant categories where the student's knowledge might be lacking. When you read through the questions, you will hopefully be reminded of some pieces of information which you definitely wish to share with your student teacher. Therefore, on a separate sheet of paper, jot notes to yourself which you might find useful later in planning your orientation program. You may also wish to encourage your student teacher to read this section in order to help him/her formulate questions that are lying just below the surface of his/her consciousness.

THE COMMUNITY

1. What kind of people live in the community?
   - Ethnic groups
   - Socioeconomic status
   - Age groups
   - Kinds of family groupings
   - Kinds of homes

2. What kind of community is it?
   - Kinds of buildings
   - Great points
   - Major problems
   - Major landmarks
   - History
   - Tone

3. How does the community relate to the school?
   - Involvement on staff
   - Parent and/or teacher groups
   - Interest in school
   - Resources in the community

4. How does the school see itself serving the community?

THE DISTRICT, CITY, AND PROFESSION

1. How is the school related to the rest of the city/the state?
   - Organization
   - Resources
   - Controls/Authority
   - Mode of operating
   - Teacher meetings

2. How is the school related to professional organizations?
   - Union/Teachers Associations
   - Content area groups
   - Universities

3. How does the school keep abreast of innovations and new materials which are available?

4. Are there provisions or privileges for advanced study, conferences, etc.?

THE SCHOOL

1. Who are the staff members?
   - Faculty members, department chairmen
   - Kitchen/maintenance staff
   - Administrative/clerical staff
   - Special services personnel
   - Teacher Aides
   - Parent helpers

2. What is the history and philosophy of the school?
   - When established
   - Rationale for name
   - Notable past principals and staff
   - Organization/grouping
   - Programs/involvement
   - Major concerns
   - Future directions

3. What resources are available? Where are they located?
   - Book room/supplies
   - Audio-visuals
   - Area to create instructional materials
   - Special services, programs

4. What are its procedures and policies?
   - Fire/disaster drills
   - Resource use
   - Recess/breaks; noon; inclement weather
   - Community relations
   - Discipline
   - Grading/promotion
   - Record keeping
   - In-service meetings
   - Textbook selection

YOUR CLASSROOM

1. How is your classroom organized?
   - Space arrangements
   - Time schedules
   - Special groups
   - Variety in scheduling
   - Pupil movement
   - Relationships to other groups in school

2. What procedures do you follow? What classroom "rules" are there?
   - File/disaster drills
   - Lunch, recess/breaks, toilet, inclement weather
   - Opening exercises

3. What are some of your policies/guidelines?
   - Discipline
   - Grading
   - Group work
   - Grouping
   - Homework
   - Visitors
   - Conferences
   - Communication with parents
   - Individualizing instruction

4. What are your feelings about experimentation in the classroom?
   - New methods
   - Alternative materials

THE CURRICULUM

1. What is your overall curriculum design for the year?
   - Each subject, unit

2. What curriculum guides are available?

3. What textbooks, visuals and supplementary materials are available?

4. How do you go about unit and lesson planning?
   - Yearly
   - Weekly
   - Daily
   - With teacher aides
   - With other faculty

THE STUDENTS

1. What kinds of backgrounds do they have?
   - Home life
   - Leisure time
   - Church/Synagogue
   - Previous educational experiences

2. What abilities do they have? How do they compare with others their age?
   - Growth, maturity
   - Perception, coordination
   - Listening, speaking
   - Reading, writing
   - Athletic, musical, and artistic talent
   - Cooperation, creativity
   - Habitual study skills

3. What interests do they have? Likes/dislikes? What activities do they work best at?

4. What records are kept, where, and how? Who may see them?

Possible Activities for Your Student Teacher

Every student teacher learns best in his/her unique way, according to his/her interests, needs, and his/her particular situation. Certainly the kinds of activities which one student teacher engages in to learn about his/her new surroundings will be quite different from another student teacher. This section lists possible activities which may be incorporated into an orientation program. It is by no means suggested that one student teacher do all of them or even most of them. The ideas are included merely as suggestions of possible activities. It is suggested that you and your student teacher read through the lists together and select some experiences which would be appropriate for your situation.

THE COMMUNITY

1. Scout the community. Note the boundary lines of the school district, major transportation routes, interesting or important landmarks, and places where people gather.
2. Work with a small group of students to construct a map of the community. Have each student locate his/her residence on the map. Note favorite public gathering places.
3. Interview a local resident and learn about the history, views, and concerns of the community residents.
4. Attend a meeting of a parent-teacher group at your school.
5. Interview some parents about how they feel that the school can better serve their children.

THE DISTRICT, CITY, AND PROFESSION

1. Visit the city and/or district offices. Find out what services are provided by these offices and how you can take advantage of them.

2. Interview the school's union or association representative. Find out how this organization operates and how it serves teachers and the schools. Find out what current issues or concerns the union or association is dealing with.

3. Visit a union or association meeting.

4. Visit a meeting of another professional group (content area group or convention).

5. Survey the teachers to discover their methods of keeping up with the latest educational products and methods.

THE SCHOOL

1. Interview an "old-timer" teacher or principal about the history of the school.

2. Scout the building and construct a map, including room numbers, names, and identifying data about students (levels, ages, curriculum area, etc.).

3. Visit the teachers' lounge to sense the tone of the teachers and their conversation topics when they are "off stage."

4. Visit other classrooms to observe various teaching styles and levels of students.

5. Introduce yourself to staff members. Make an effort to call them by name.

6. Find out what audio-visual equipment is available. Learn to use any equipment unfamiliar to you.

7. Find out how to requisition supplies and when this is done.

8. Compile a list of standard supplies that you would like to have in your own classroom.

9. Learn the procedures for using the library and other resource areas.

10. Observe the work of special services in the school (nurse, counselor, community representative, adjustment teacher, master teacher, school clerk, speech therapist, psychologist, department chairman, etc.)

11. Interview the principal and several teachers about the strong points of the school, the major concerns of the faculty, and the future directions of the school.

YOUR CLASSROOM

1. Construct a grid of the classroom. Include location of students (if appropriate) and resources.

2. Duplicate cooperating teacher's weekly and daily schedules.

3. Discuss long- and short-range lesson planning with the cooperating teacher.

4. Learn routine procedures for lunch, toilet, recess/break, care of facilities and supplies, distributing and collecting materials, etc.

5. Find out the "rules" of the classroom.

6. Ask your cooperating teacher about common discipline problems and recommended ways of dealing with them.

THE CURRICULUM

1. Make a chart of the overall curriculum design for the year.

2. Scan all the curriculum guides. Note items which are pertinent to units which will be taught during your student teaching experience.

3. Obtain a set of textbooks that are used by the students (teacher's edition if possible). Study the materials.

4. Locate additional resources that pertain to the lessons you will be teaching and incorporate them in your planning.

5. Record helpful resource material for future reference. Be sure to include how to obtain the material.

THE STUDENTS

1. Keep an anecdotal record on one student for one week. Note his behavior, work, habits, reactions to various situations, etc.

2. Investigate students' records. Note particularly which students have health problems or other disabilities, students from broken homes, students whose parents both work.

3. Observe students to discern the leaders, cliques, etc.

4. Conduct and analyze a sociogram of the class.

5. Learn the names of all students and something each one likes to do or excels in.

6. Design or select an interest inventory. Administer it to the students.

7. Administer an informal reading inventory or other diagnostic tests to selected students.

8. Select one student to tutor in areas of his weakness.

Planning Your Orientation Program

The time has now come for you to plan your own orientation program. Hopefully the previous information has been helpful in creating a flow of ideas in your mind. This section is designed to coalesce your thinking into a workable plan for you and your student teacher. It is suggested that you work through this section once before your student teacher arrives and again after his/her arrival to make any adjustments necessary. Before you begin, remember, this exercise is designed to help you formulate a plan. Some questions will be more difficult for you than others. Start with the easier ones and return to those more difficult. If the question is not helpful in planning your orientation program, do not feel compelled to answer it. Hopefully, as a result of this exercise you will articulate a tentative orientation program for your student teacher. It is understood that you will be engaging in self-evaluation in implementing the program. You are free to alter anything which does not work as you expect it to.

1. Name and locate the publications about your school and its policies which your student teacher would find helpful.
2. List policies and procedures your student teacher should know about your school or class.
3. Name times during the day or week which can be made available for regular conferences with your student teacher and intermittent conferences with the university supervisor.

4. Name activities which you will encourage your student teacher to do during his/her student teaching experience.

5. Name small-group activities your student teacher can engage in from the first week in the classroom. List students needing tutorial help and specific areas of weaknesses.

6. List materials in your classroom/library/etc. which you will encourage your student teacher to become familiar with.

7. Name curriculum topics and skill areas which are possible unit titles which your student teacher might develop.

8. List teaching-related activities (conferences, parent meetings, open house, work committees, etc.) which your student teacher should be exposed to.

9. List things you can do to make your student teacher feel like a significant contributor to the class from the beginning of his/her experience.

10. Name the "tricks of the trade" you intend to share with your student teacher.

11. List other teaching styles or grade levels you would encourage your student teacher to observe.

12. Name your criteria for excellence in teaching which you will be looking for in evaluating your student teacher.

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